

INSTALLATION SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

GROVELAND INDEPENDENT CHURCH,

SUNDAY, MAY 1, 1853.

BY DAVID A. WASSON.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

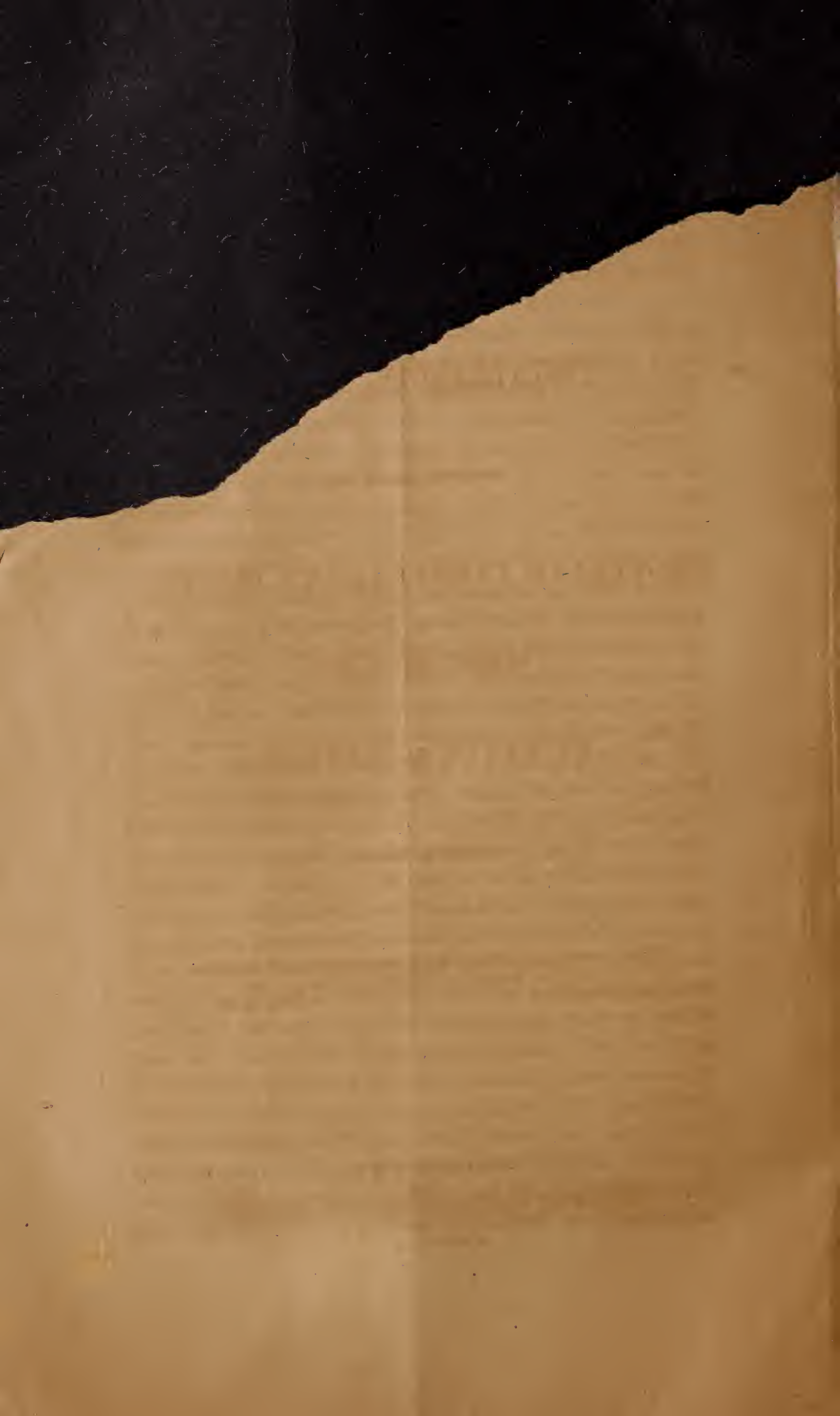
"Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming Fountain ; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition."

John Milton.

BOSTON:

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M DCCC LIII.



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SACRIFICIAL RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL RELIGION.

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S E R M O N .

HOSEA, VI. 6.

FOR I DESIRED MERCY, AND NOT SACRIFICE.

LAST year, as summer was passing into autumn, golden September succeeding to sultry August, it was my lot, in the presence of an audience to some extent the same with that now before me, to enter my utmost protest against the Letter-worshipping theologies and selfish "religion" of the day. Thereupon followed, what was to be looked for, and not deprecated, my summary exclusion from the fellowship of the old church. Nor for this let the agents and representatives of that church, who did her will in this matter, be at all blamed. So far as they acted from sincere conviction, their action, whether or not absolutely right, was right relatively to themselves. And if, in the manner of that exclusion, we were surprised and pained by a certain unexpected rudeness and seeming spitefulness, yet, let it be confessed, that we misinterpreted this, so far as we understood it to imply any malicious wish to misuse, to maltreat and oppress, either you or myself. The good men on whom devolved that "painful duty," felt obliged in conscience to roll up very black and thunderous upon us, a heavy ecclesiastical cloud, charged with electrical heats,—so to strike terror into all heterodox hearts, and blast with bright lightnings the budding movement toward new organizations. They doubtless expected

success, — fancied that when the dust raised by the thunderbolt they thought to cast was cleared away, the protesting spirit here would be seen writhing in death-agonies, soon to be stiff and cold.

But these good men were mistaken. No such effect followed. For, alas, the thunders of the old New-England Church are all boltless now ; its arm, like aged Priam's, falls ineffectual, with weak and hurtless stroke ; its anathema, issuing from decrepit lips, but clothes a shriek as hollow and despairing as that which cleft the steep of Delphos when the smitten deity felt his dynasty over, and fled his fane forever ; and its blessing is well nigh as bootless as its curse.

It was not so once. Once an inspiration was in that voice, which could make it a terror, or a benediction ; a vigor dwelt in that arm, which could not only break the bones of heresy, but raze the strongholds of sin, smite down brawny oppressions, and deal a death-blow to the giant evils of the time. But the rigor and the inspiration are gone — forever ? Are they gone forever ? We will leave the question unanswered, — leave it for the limited number of noble men to answer, who, in that fellowship, are not hunting heresy, but exhibiting that same spirit which made glorious the grand old days of the Church.

Blessings upon her for the good she has wrought, or for the smaller good, much mixed with evil, she is doing ; a hearty appreciation of the “limited number” of faithful, courageous, truth-speaking men, she still contains ; — these we freely accord : and so, farewell dear old Calvinistic church ! Mother of many heroisms and saintships, form wherein a divinely brave and noble spirit has dwelt, — farewell ! Truth and duty grow clear ; new aspirations, new knowledges, fire our hearts and fill our minds ; a new trust in the ever-present, ever-inspiring God, gives us calmness and courage ; the blinding, bewildering theological fogs roll away, leaving God's green earth lying fair

before us, God's azure sky arching lovingly overhead; the Eternal Lights shine out there serene and clear, guiding our steps, and with eyes devoutly fixed thereon, we go forth "to fresh fields, and pastures new."

We go not to curse the house that once gave us shelter, leaky grown and tottering though now it be. Into sad dilapidation it has indeed fallen in these days. The rains inundate it; the winds whistle through its crannies, and search it with a keen and curious quest; the owl and bat of superstition fly there; there the rat of worldliness hides and thieves and thrives; and we could find there no shelter for our souls, no divine habitation. We go thence; but go only in order to build better, for ourselves, and for those that come after. We would fain live a true, faithful and healthful life; we would fain make this earth, in some small degree, a more hospitable habitation, for the young souls that shall hereafter fare hither, than it has proved to ourselves.

And having set forth, whatsoever obligations of duty, whatsoever convictions of truth, whatever force of hope our souls have learned to feel and cherish, all impel us to persistency and perseverance in our enterprise. Thus from Sunday to Sunday, during the mild winter, we have met each other here, have here offered up our prayers, chanted our hymns, have spoken and heard, not without earnestness, and, as we hope, not without result. And now, together with the great miracle of reviving nature, with the springing of grass, the early blossoming of wild flowers, the bursting of buds, and the rejoicing of newly-arrived birds, — in the world of man, also, somewhat has blossomed, and flung forth its fragrance upon that subtler air.

We have founded here, as well as we could, a church for the new time; a church looking forward, not backward; a church of hope for our earth, and not of despair; a church of freedom, into which we can put something of individual thought and will, and do not merely submit ourselves to it,

as dough to be shapen and baked. We have set up here a free pulpit, demanding of its occupant this only, that, drawing, to the utmost possible, an inspiration fresh from God, he speak the best word that is in him.

It now seems to us a duty to render some account, to ourselves and others, of the step we have taken, the basis on which we stand, and the attitude we hold toward the old church and the new time. And before all, let this again be emphatically enunciated : — Toward the old church we bear no ill-will, no faintest tint of malice, no shadow of grudge whatsoever. We differ; and depart from it, but without hate and without quarrel. If it has once misled, blinded, bewildered us; if it has done much to filch from us that dear treasure, of faith in God and in Humanity; if it has repelled us into angry and inflamed protest, into fierce denial, on the one hand, or well-nigh subdued us into slavish tameness, and wicked conformity, on the other; if in morals it has preached to us cowardice for courage, prudence for philanthropy, and greed of private satisfactions for aspiration after a truly human blessedness; if by its theories and theologies it had nearly shut out from our recognition this glad and grand universe, ordered and moulded into beauty and rhythm, and everlasting harmony — this fair life, with all its sweet affections, and genial activities, its hopes making sorrow to smile, and its heaven of a divine humanity seen through the mist of tears; — and for this brave march of life, has substituted a ghastly, spectral procession of gibbering and squeaking ghosts, fore-doomed, wandering for a little time upon the hither side of Styx, till the grim ferryman take them over; substituted for this wondrous, star-lighted, azure-skied universe, “the living garment of God,” a universe monstrous, with two faces looking contrary ways, devilish-divine, irreconcilable, an everlasting, immeasurable contradiction, an infinite solecism; if it has done this, and when we reject its panoramic chaos and turn

devoutly toward the true Cosmos — when we withhold our homage from Infinite Caprice, and give it to Eternal Law — then plies us with anathemas ; — yet, we can forgive it. For we have obtained deliverance, are still cheerful, still strong for duty, still, and more than ever, are able to love man, and trust in God ; and the sense of victory is sweet. “ If a man forgive,” says Bacon, “ it shows that he is planted above injuries.” Having climbed now above these injuries, and got fairly beyond their reach, we can forgive. But can we not do more ? Can we not acknowledge, that the old church has rendered us good as well as evil, and bestowed the good intentionally, with labor and sacrifice ; but the evil ignorantly, supposing it gave good ? For my part, I cannot deny that it has rendered us great compensations. Many an evil it has removed ; many a flower planted in our way ; many a fine chant of worship has taught our hearts to sing ; many a mystery of spiritual blessedness it has adopted into the thought and moral experience of man. For two things I shall always feel indebted and grateful to it,—that it taught me to love and reverence the Sacred Martyr of Palestine — that it taught me to know the force and meaning of Duty. And I doubt not, that as we come to look back upon it from a more distant elevation, we shall more discover how many seeds of good it has sown for us. This said, let us pass on.

Perhaps in no better way can we discriminate our ground, than by setting forth the distinction between Sacrificial and Spiritual Religion. The latter we adhere to ; the former we abjure.

1. In all sincere religion there is doubtless an element of good. It implies an ideal ; an escape from mere bestiality ; a sense of somewhat sacred in the universe, before which the worshiper bows himself down. But this Divine Mystery is at first mostly an object of dread, as children fear in the dark ; he is conceived of merely as

powerful, able to injure, able to help ; and men naturally inquire how they can propitiate him, and obtain his favor. Often also he is appealed to for deliverance from the churlish rudeness and oppression of Nature ; as in times of drought, of pestilence, or of other calamity. Or calamity is taken for evidence that he is enraged. In either case some method is desired of appeasing, of propitiating him, of obtaining his good-will and assistance. And in all this there is something worthy. The mere power of originating and entertaining the idea of Supernal Being stamps man as a superior nature.

But a way of obtaining one's favor is to offer him gifts. Thus, perhaps, originates the system of sacrifice. Man gathers the first fruits of his field, or selects the firstlings of his flock, and offers them up as his propitiatory gift to the Mightiest. Thereby does he at some cost ask favor. Doubtless there are times when sacrifice takes a higher strain. In great joy, in the flood-tides of gratitude and love, in the sweet and rapturous hours when worship gushes spontaneously, irrepressibly from the soul, he pours out the blood of bullocks and lambs only to symbolize the emotions with which his bosom is swelling. But also it sometimes darkens and reddens into a gloom lurid and horrid enough. In times of furious excitement ; in times of terrible calamity, when fear in its blind frenzy has driven forth pity from the house of the human soul ; the fierce and furious, or terror-stricken tribes have offered up their fellow-man, and so shed the richest blood as their last appeal to a (supposed) stern and inexorable Deity. Thus it is told, that when the Grecian fleet, ready to sail for Troy, was long delayed by unfavorable winds, Agamemnon, in obedience to the oracle, offered up in sacrifice to the enraged goddess his own daughter, the beautiful Iphegenia. Thus Jephthah, about to engage the dreaded Ammonites, vowed that if victory were accorded to him, he would offer up as a burnt-offering to the Hebrew Deity

the first who should come forth from the door of his house to meet him on his return. It proved to be his daughter, his only child. "And Jephthah did," the account says, "according as he vowed." Thus when Saul had been a long time dead, there came, it is told, a terrible famine upon the land of Israel. Three fatal years it lasted. Were they all to perish? Die there and lie unburied, man and maid, the hoary head of age and the silken locks of infancy together? Why had the Deity sent this upon them? Whence came his unappeasable wrath? At length it was supposed to be ascertained that the Lord had sent this calamity on account of an injury which Saul, while living, had done the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites were called and asked what would satisfy them. They answered, Give us seven men of Saul's posterity, that we may offer them up in sacrifice to Jehovah. It was done. David saved the two children of Jonathan; the others, seven persons, were led out to the top of a hill, "and they hanged them up before the Lord."

2. But as the nations advance out of barbarism, as the rude natures of men soften into mildness, they learn to indulge milder notions of Deity; and these cruel immolations, along with much else that is rude and cruel, cease. A less sanguinary system of sacrifice begins, indeed has long since begun, to be desired. Nay, a degree of true wisdom begins to prevail in it. Sacrifices are offered which prove directly beneficial to man. Such was the Jewish Sabbath.* It was a sacrifice of *time*. It was one day in seven laid on the altar to please and propitiate the Deity. Yet it was wisely ordered; for among that rude, out-of-door, barbarous people it became a powerful agent of civilization.

3. A third kind of sacrifice is in the use of ritual. Not that ritual is of necessity sacrificial; of course not; but it

* Let me not be understood to disparage the Christian Sunday.

is so when propitiatory. Certain forms of ceremony and supplication, certain sacraments, unctions, incensings, are supposed to have an appointed and occult power to bring one into favor with God. And great stress being laid upon these, rectitude, moral energy, all the higher qualities of manhood come to be regarded with a certain indifference, even with a comparative contempt; at best, stand in the second rank. So that the utmost of *respectable* viciousness, of moral poltroonery and cold calculating selfishness, is thought to have its prejudicial force easily overcome by the virtue of a few ritual sacrifices. Thus one may live a traitor, and die a saint; may immerse himself to the very eyes in meanness and moral treachery, and come forth at last clean as Naaman from Jordan, by the magic washing of a little divinely-patented ceremony and profession. What matters the moral ignobleness of his life, provided that, by the due sacrifices, he, as Abbé Georcel said of Louis XV., “make the *amende honorable* to God?” This was said of a dastardly and dissolute despot lying upon his death-bed in Catholic France. But in Protestant New England have we not seen one making “honorable amends” quite as cheaply, and unlocking heaven with an orthodox epitaph?

The Catholic Church has carried the system of ritual sacrifice thoroughly and consistently out. But with the simpler and less expressive ritual of the Protestant Church, the same spirit is compatible. A beggar may be more avaricious than a millionaire, and doat upon his handful of copper as the other does not upon his vaults full of gold. He who says a prayer, goes to a church on a Sunday, partakes of the Lord’s Supper, engages in any simplest rite with the feeling that this is in itself an enjoined and propitiatory duty,—that man is a sacrificialist as truly “as any lay Papist of Loretto.” Thus also there is a kind of internal and invisible ritual, called *faith*, to which great importance is often attached. “You are good; you are

better than many Christians," said a clergyman now living; "but you cannot be saved; you do not exercise *faith*." This "faith" which is not character, nor anything appertaining to character,—what is it but merely a *mental* ritual?

4. The fourth species of sacrifice occurs when Intellect is surrendered to the Gibeonites to be offered up. The privilege of intellectual sincerity is reckoned too great for man. Truth, freely seen, freely believed, is a luxury from which one must, in spite of all divine hungers, rigorously abstain. For there are held to be certain articles of opinion, which he who will propitiate Deity must accept as though he believed them,—believe them also, if he can. But opinion being, as Ben Jonson said, "a light and superficial thing," changes constantly. Old opinions become incredible, and we have to descend again to the first truths, obtain again the original insights, out of which they sprang, and thence rise to fresh and more comprehensive statements. This takes place according to a fixed law. But with respect to *this* set of opinions, that law must consent to abrogate itself! These must be received, credible or incredible. Reason, that is, *the faculty by which we believe*, if incapable of adopting these into its family of truths, must cast itself down and let them bestride its neck. In fine, Intellect must be sacrificed on the altar of Traditional Belief. But it struggles, writhes, sometimes boldly refuses; is therefore condemned as "carnal," as "unsanctified;" and the duty is strenuously urged of believing without, or against, evidence. Or one is bidden, either not to investigate at all, or to investigate partially, with a conclusion rigidly and unalterably predetermined. "So that," says Jeremy Taylor, "if they read, study, pray, search records, and use all the means of art and industry in the pursuit of truth, it is not with a resolution to follow that which *shall seem truth to them*, but to confirm what before they did believe; and if any argument shall seem

unanswerable against their church, they are *to take it for a temptation*, not for an illumination." Then Intellect is driven to the degrading task of defeating, subjugating, sometimes of destroying itself. "He who destroys a good book," says Milton, "kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye, . . . slays an immortality rather than a life." But this immortality is slain more immediately than by the destruction of its effects; it throttles itself piously — "hangs itself up unto the Lord." Now subterfuge, logical chicane, argumentative trickery come into vogue; the "single eye" begins to be an abomination; all the dubitations and distractions that beset free inquiry are insisted on and magnified; a courageous, hopeful, radical search for truth is discountenanced, sometimes openly condemned; every man of large brain who at the last moment has given a cold semi-recognition to the prescribed theories, is instantly seen by a thousand Stephens to be high advanced and glorified in heaven, while upon earth his reputation is used to shoot the guns of sacrificial conservatism, — though it be mere *want* of noble and uplifting belief which shows throughout his unsteady, tortuous career; all the ignorances, prejudices, superstitions, yea, and sometimes the very avarices and crimes of society are enlisted into the service of (miscalled) religion. Thus that intellect, which is the inspiration of God into the soul of man, is decried, barked at, hunted, hounded and harried, till in affright it consent to fling itself beneath the popular Juggernaut and perish. Sacrificial religion is at first satisfied with offering up an elemental life; at length it demands that reason itself, "the ethereal and fifth essence," bleed upon its altar. And, as was intimated, if there be some grand wrong, *not yet unfashionable*, against which the reason and heart of man protest, it takes that into its alliance. Thus he who will, may even now hear Northern votaries of the Letter and Southern holders of human flesh, lovingly uniting their voices in joint howl

against that "infidelity" (as they both term it,) which has resolved to believe and obey God's testimony of truth and duty given in the soul.

And now, what if I should tell you that the necessity of this sacrifice has been openly, expressly avowed and urged by a living theological writer in high repute? What if I should say that he most earnestly deprecates the union of great intellectual activity with strong religious tendencies; seems to desire that every thinker may be a worldling; will apparently patronize any base avarice, any bodily sluggishness, any mental drudgery, which may serve to dull the edge of intellect and prevent the quest for truth? What if I should tell you that, having first pronounced Christianity, not a spiritual, but "a documentary religion," he rejoices that these documents are in foreign languages, not to be adequately understood in a translation, and only approachable across dreary deserts of barren and sandy learning; and that the avowed ground of his rejoicing is, that by all this moiling and droiling, this dusty and drudging travel, the faculty of thought will become way-weary, outworn, and incapable of performing its functions? Would you not think this a wilful exaggeration? Yet such is the fact. The writer is Isaac Taylor of Ongar. The book in which this appears is the very one which established his reputation — the "Natural History of Enthusiasm." Having stated that a large amount of erudition and letter-learning is required as a theological outfit; having expressed an earnest hope that this will continue to be demanded; he proceeds to exhibit the good which such studies do. This good is found in their power "to impair the freshness and force of the intellectual constitution, to chill and cloud the imagination, and to break the elasticity of the inventive faculty; if not to blunt the keenness of the powers of analysis. They thus indispose the mind to the wantonness of speculation, and impart to it the TIMIDITY, the ACQUIESCENCE, the patience, which are

proper," &c. Elsewhere the same writer speaks of the good effect which "physical inertness," or "some motive of secular interest" may have to allay what he calls "the diseased cravings of the brain;" and so save from the damnation of heresy. "PHYSICAL INERTNESS!" "MOTIVES OF SECULAR INTEREST!" These to save mankind with! A new *Evangelium* in the world since One said, "I will send you another Comforter, even the SPIRIT OF TRUTH!" Shall we name it the modern Gospel of Stupidity?

This Mr. Taylor is really in some respects a superior man. He thinks; nay, even approaches the distinction of a thinker. Only, he thinks suicidally; thinks against the life of thought. And the book, from which I have quoted, went through nine editions in a very short time!

Bacon says that, "In superstition wise men follow fools, and arguments are fitted to practice in a reversed order." Mr. Taylor is evidently only fitting arguments to the practice of his church and himself; and you must judge whether or not it is by following fools that he arrives at this consecration of stupidity and insincerity.

5. But the whole battle with sacrificial religion has not been fought out, till it has been met and vanquished on one more field. It demands finally the debasement of Conscience. The sense of right, also, must be offered up. "I should like to know," said a Calvinistic clergyman of this county, in answer to a question proposed to a company of ministers concerning the rightfulness of an action by them ascribed to God,— "I should like to know if God is obliged to do what seems right to us?" Here is the whole case in a nut-shell. You are to praise God for the supreme justice of actions, which, at the same time, your whole moral nature protests against, and your very soul abhors! You are in prayer and psalm and sermon to proclaim that white and radiant right, which to your own

eye is black wrong! That is, you are, as the ancient Gibeonites did with the posterity of Saul, "to hang up" your moral nature, your conscience, "before the Lord." What wonder that in those whipped into this detestable slavery,—tugging at the oar for life in such a devils' galley,—there remains small moral energy to protest against the slaveries and social evils of the time? You ask them to rouse up and go to the battles of the Lord against wickedness in places high and low; they are already fighting what they deem the battles of the Lord against the sense of justice in their own souls. You demand of them a noble energy of conscience: conscience is the very foe they have just subdued. You pray them to love the right, and serve it: their soul's love of right even now lies bleeding beneath the knife of sacrifice. You protest against this as the sum of all sacrileges, the last profanation and blasphemy; they eye you askance, and mutter, "Infidel!"

A striking instance of this *truly* infidel sacrifice of conscience is mentioned by Coleridge. A clergyman,—a man set apart to preach God's perfect Right,—was asked respecting that most dastardly, most perfidious murder of Sisera by Jael. He was her husband's friend. In misfortune he was flying from pursuing foes. She went forth to meet him, all smiles and welcome; enticed him into her tent, covered him with a mantle, gave him milk to drink; and the weary, confiding man fell asleep. Then she crept cat-like toward him, holding a hammer and a nail, and with a sudden blow, drove the iron into his brain. Of all murders ever committed, there was never one more mean and wanton. But when this clergyman, says Coleridge, heard doubt insinuated of the transcendent happiness of Jael, he answered tartly that "he wished no better morality than that of the Bible." Oh Heavens! If this is to pass off as the "morality of the Bible," we might as well have the morality of Newgate. And this

man, by a kind of transcendental misnomer, called himself, and was called, a *Christian* minister! Into such a chaos and triple confusion thrice multiplied do men sometimes fall! Into such straits also does sacrificialism push its votaries! You shall see Falsehood, Slavery, Public Murder, Private Assassination, and other timber of a like kind, all framed into an altar called, "Morality of the Bible," and thereon the Conscience of man offered up. And, as if absurdity and profanation could never go far enough, the officiating priest is named a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! If men were mute at such mockery, every stone in the street would find a tongue to cry, Shame!

It might seem not very necessary to specify any practical evils resulting from sacrificial religion. But I will mention two.

1. Upon a class of warm, religious, often narrow and morbid, sometimes tender and susceptible natures, it operates to crush all just, kindly and rational elements; not seldom producing in the end a mere monstrosity. The history of Jesuitism, and other histories *not* of Jesuitism, are rich in such examples. Once accept it as duty to believe what is not true to you, to call that right which to you is not right; and you are afloat, helmless, on the waves; there is no telling upon what fiend's coast you may at length be cast. Who knows not that the worst crimes of all time, the most pitiless butchery, the most cunning and deliberate treachery, have been perpetrated, not only in the name, but under the blind impulse of religion? And this will be no riddle to him who is wont to consider that religion, *without* the illuminations of reason, the whispered guidance of conscience, and the mild alliance of the affections, is a deaf, eyeless, tyrant *force*. It is the irrational, relentless Kratos, that at the selfish and revengeful bidding of Jove, binds the Promethean spirit to the crag. To all human relentings, to

every suggestion of pity it answers, as brute Strength in Eschylus does to compassionate Hephaistos, hesitating to obey a bad behest, — with menace. “Take care that Zeus does not catch thee loitering.” Thus religion degenerates, to use Dr. Arnold’s phrase, “into mere power-worship, which may be devil-worship.” O what a waste of God-given faculty is here, — the richest gold of the spirit is shapen into a dagger to stab it to death! I have myself seen persons, who, under the influence of an unmoral religious sentiment, were made deaf as death to any voice of reason, to any consideration of right, to any plea of pity, except so far as these were comprehended in their established system of sacrifices. Thus, that very power which in the kind design of God was meant to lift the soul above the bewildering mists and fogs “of this dim spot that men call Earth,” into the serene atmosphere of Duty and Eternal Law, is changed into its fierce, arbitrary, unreasoning tyrant, whipping it into a more miserable subjection, instead of making it divinely free. All illuminations, all sweet admonitions of God’s Spirit are shut out; for these can come only as a silent, inward, unwitnessed testimony of truth, or of right; and to these an exasperated sacrificialism can give no heed. This is one evil of sacrificial religion — the result of an intense, but blind, religious earnestness.

2. The other occurs where there is little of religious feeling, but a certain fearful or forethoughtful habit, which prompts one to make a prudent provision for the future. The whole matter is then taken up in a spirit purely *commercial*. The church is the man’s Sunday shop, where he trades for a heavenly fortune, as elsewhere on week days for an earthly. He invests “religious duties,” as he would so much cash, for the immense compound interest, in the shape of future happiness they are expected to bring. He offers up the appointed sacrifices, receives the promise of everlasting delights in return, and feels that he

makes a good bargain. Yea, truly, heaven is cheap at the expense of a two days' or two hours' conversion, a little respectable church-membership, some few prayers said, and sufficient "respect for the Sabbath." Such also is his opinion; and when the minister from the pulpit expatiates upon the vast future profits of his investment, and sets it off in contrast to the coming pains of the less prudent, he feels pleased, glad, and "enjoys religion" in a very satisfactory manner. But ask of him a mind open to the approaches of Truth, a heart to respond to the demands of Right; ask him for help to raise up the dusky and sweaty millions who are toiling unpaid and most wickedly oppressed; and he has no ear for you. That does not PAY; sacrifice does; and there is the difference. His investment is good without this extra outlay; his minister every Sunday tacitly or expressly assures him that it is so; and having sweet content in such assurance, what needs he more? If others suffer, if others are wronged, is that his affair? His dinner tastes as well, his dividends are as large, and heaven meanwhile, (provided only that he keeps up the requisite sacrifices, which he certainly will,) quite secure. Leave this reforming business to agitators, unbelievers, fanatics, and other restless and godless people; he is a Christian and is going to heaven! He has nothing to do but keep safe his scrip, (what he, profaning a noble word, calls his "hope,") and present it at the due time.

(It is not pleasant to me, this slighting use of terms once so sacred, and capable, one would say, of being so sacred still. Loth would I be to grieve one tender and reverential spirit. But a sacrificial religion grown commercial and heartless greets us at every turn, and to spare it would be sheer and blameable weakness.)

A sacrificial theology affords terms and temptations to this commercial religion. Such theology is compelled to accept the analogy and use the phrases of trade. It speaks of "covenants" or bargains made; of "payments"

rendered and received ; of “purchases” and “equivalents,” &c. Nay, to crown all, men speak of having “an INTEREST in the blood of Christ,” as they would of having an interest in a ship or manufactory. Thus Christianity comes to be conceived of as a vast Insurance Office ; in which one may take out a policy and dwell secure. Certain quantities of “faith” must be paid for said policy ; likewise a small per centage in the way of appointed sacrifices ; all the same as in other insurances ; and now, lo ! the soul is safe !

These are the two evils into which Sacrificial Religion runs. The earnest and tender it crushes and abuses, the morbid and narrow it exasperates ; while to the hard-natured, worldly and callous it becomes a matter of trade. The former is often a result over which one could weep ; but this cold, prudent, heartless “other-world-liness,” — as Coleridge, with his rare felicity of epithet, calls it, — at once provokes and justifies indignation and the plainest dealing.

Sacrificial Religion, under any and all forms, we abjure and cast behind us. And we turn toward that religion of the spirit which all true saints have lived ; which all prophets, apostles and inspired men, according to the measure of their inspiration, have preached ; and which, to the whole extent of its prevalence and power, purifies, elevates, blesses mankind.

In thus dismissing a false system and turning toward a true, we do by no means abjure and divorce ourselves from the past. That which we hold to and cherish is no new and unexampled thing in the world. In all ages and climes, where religion has been earnest and elevated, though its modes of worship and forms of thought and expression may have been sacrificial, there has yet been in it a moral power, a good energy, a living, rational, loving force, which was not sacrificial, was noble, beneficent and from God. There dwelt in the heart of it a

divine inspiration ; dwelt in it a light of eternal truth and reason, kindling, beaming, spreading abroad benign rays, casting sweet illuminations of duty on the earthly path of man, lighting up the future with far-glancing radiances of intuition and prophecy, and touching the vast, vague and veiled eternity with supernal splendors and glorious crimson hues of hope.

We shall never lack an illustration of this while the Hebrew Scriptures remain. The Jewish religion, one might heedlessly say, was wholly sacrificial. But it was not wholly, nor yet characteristically. Sacrifice, and sacrificial forms of thought it had in common with all the religions of the nations. What it did not have altogether in common with these, what was in some degree peculiar to itself, was a wakeful, daring, conquering moral energy, a rushing inspiration of *Duty* upon whose grand and foaming tide the psalmists, seers and prophets of Israel were borne. It was the noble ardor and courage, the mighty heats and ferments of Love, the inextinguishable force of Hope, the high-souled heroic Trust, the strong feeling of Duty, the grand fidelity to intuitions and intimations of Truth, the open-eyed, childlike, reverent Appreciation, — these it was which constituted the inspiration, the true Religion of those old Hebrews ; these it is, whether or not we know it, which cause us to cherish their history and remains to day. When David says, “Trust in the Lord and do good ;” when with rapt, awe-struck soul he contemplates the annual miracle of reviving nature, or discerns a divine mystery in the cedars upon Lebanon, in the brooks that run among them, in the winds chanting soft or loud through their tops ; when Isaiah cries, “Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees to turn aside the needy from judgment, to take away *the right* from the poor of my people ;” when he gives admonition, “Learn to do well ; seek justice ; relieve the oppressed ; defend the fatherless ; plead for the widow ;” here the divine

spark hidden in man flames out; here is true illumination, sweet pity, noble moral energy; and these are inspirations indeed. It is this, I repeat; not its circumcision practised by several tribes and still practised in the wilds of Africa; not its bloody sacrifices, in use among every nation, noble and ignoble, under the whole heaven; but these grand insights, intuitions, illuminations, this all-conquering sense of justice, this enduring and creative heat of love, — these which gave a peculiar character and value to Hebrew religion. This was the truly human or spiritual, energy which it has given that people to exemplify. This we accept at its hands — a mighty gift. For the sake of this we can forget the dark turbid passions upon whose waves the people, yea, and their “man after God’s own heart,” were rocked and well nigh wrecked; can forget the hideous sacrifices which in their blind pain, superstition, terror and *want* of inspiration they were sometimes left to make, or to permit. They sowed for us many fields; from their labors we have reaped, are now reaping, many a golden harvest: what if thistle and cockle did mingle somewhat with the wheat? Are we so steeped in stupidity that we cannot sift them out, and still be thankful?

Let then none fancy that Spiritual Religion is some new affair, some modern tricky invention, fit toy for a novelty-loving generation. It dates back to the first days, to that period in the fresh dewy morning of the world, lying sunny and serene in the imaginations of men, when the spiritual product, Man, began to be. It is mingled with all the oldest and most venerable memories of Man’s existence. It began with the first prelusive thrill of noble awe that ever swept in music across a human heart, but *not* in the superstitious fear that blended with it; in the first gush of open-eyed reverent wonder, (the seed, says Bacon, of thought and knowledge,) which ever went out from a soul, but not in the infantile credulous conjectures

to which that wonder gave birth ; in the “first ferments of the great affections,” but not in the seethings of hate and rage which accompanied those great irregular heats and outbursts of love. In these Spiritual Religion began ; it has grown with the growth, been purified by the culture of mankind ; and now when thousands of years have passed, when the army of saints and heroes is waxed great and found in every land, when moreover Christianity is eighteen and a half centuries old on the earth,—is it any strange and unwarrantable proceeding to distinguish it from all admixtures, from all temporary alliances, from all special symbols, and contemplate it as one mighty entity alone ?

But cannot some specific, analytical statement of Spiritual Religion be given ? It can be briefly given ; but there are dangers. Analysis can never do more than give sections and dissevered parts of truth. Especially must it do most inadequate justice to the great mysteries of the human soul. Remember, then, that you are to take my statements as such approximations to the whole truth as I am here and now able to make ; and are to deal with them very freely. And with this caution I proceed.

1. It is a great step, one of the greatest, when the latent sense of that which we call the Brotherhood of Mankind, hitherto only shadowed forth by the affections, begins to enter the understanding and to be seen as a Law. Man learns that he does not live for and by himself alone ; that mysterious relationships and bonds of nearness connect him with his fellows ; and dimly discerns that in those affections which link soul to soul, God is. God is present in these relations, there exerting his power, making his demands : there consequently must be met, worshipped, obeyed. The sacrificialist, conceiving of God as a purely *foreign* Substance and Power, not ruling benignly *in* man, but sceptring it *over* him,—may have fine affections, tender mercies, may hear within the demands these

make. But he does not recognise these demands as the voice of Supernal Authority; he knows not that they represent infinitely sacred Law; knows not that these human affections are divine, God dwelling in them, and through them binding these myriad human units into one vast Humanity. His religion continues yet to be a superstition; it has not united itself with the sweet and just affections of his soul. Nay, it is not seldom these very affections which he sacrifices. *He goes out of his humanity to worship*; more, he sometimes *outrages* his humanity as an act of worship.

Then in some most earnest, most blessed moment the truth dawns upon him, reddening in the east, and bringing sweet morning to his soul. He perceives that God is not foreign to man, but akin,—dwells with him and in him; and that the great affections of humanity represent and shadow him forth. And as his twilight brightens toward day, he sees clearly that when we go to God as foreign to man, as one by sacrifices, incensings, incantations, to be appeased, propitiated, flattered, we go to him where he is not, we fling our incense to the heedless winds, we pour out the blood of sacrifice on unblessed and pagan altars, we bellow our petitions unto the ear of nothingness. God present in the affections of our nature, *there* to be met and worshipped, by raising up the fallen, by defending the weak, by freeing the oppressed, by all noble and humane endeavor;—ah, imagine the sweetness of that heavenly hour when first this thought announced itself to a soul of man,—was also by him recognised as an angel of Everlasting Truth.

Thus it is that the prophet, listening with entranced ear, hears, amid the deep and awful hush of his soul, a voice breathed up from the Fount of Being, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” Blessed revelation! He gathers up the sweet tidings, bears them on his bosom abroad, and pours them, like balm, upon the wounded and fearful

hearts of men. And they? They stop their ears; they seize him, fling him into dungeons, upon racks, anywhere, — out of the world, it may be. “Impious wretch! To disparage the solemn sacrifices! To deny the sacred law! To place man above God!” Thus every principle of Spiritual Religion has been freely given; and yet has been how dearly bought! The terror-whipped sacrificialists *dared not* listen. Fear, with its singing thong, lashed them into deafness and cruelty. They were afraid of bringing down upon themselves the wrath of the brute deity they worshipped. And thus every word of God’s sweet evangel has lain long ages at the door of mankind, rejected and outcast, before admittance to it was given.

A sense of God’s presence in these affections and sympathies, which bind man to man, and make each the neighbor of every other; of infinite sanctions attending upon all merciful thoughts and deeds; of an infinite sacredness belonging to the relations between soul and soul; — this underlies the doctrine and religious acknowledgment of human brotherhood. And this, as it comes to be *felt* and to have power among men, constitutes what it serves my convenience to name the *first great step* in Spiritual Religion. And herewith I pass on.

2. We will next consider of Conscience. Conscience has its roots, I suppose, in the great affections. The moral sentiment is perhaps evolved, as a higher product, from the ferment of these in their union with intellect. In the patriarchs we see noble affections, even noble religious affections, but small moral energy. The edge of conscience was dull, — like the edge of the stone tools and weapons used by the early tribes, compared with our steel. Abraham lies; Isaac cheats; Jacob obtains the primogenital inheritance and blessing by low trickery. But from the great heats of love, the seethings of desire, the sense of injury, and the insights of intellect, results a new spiritual activity, which comes to mingle with human life, and to

shed its glories over the history of the race. It is the Moral Sentiment, the knowledge of RIGHT.

Before any considerable energy of this sentiment, there is somewhat which seems to occupy its place, and which, though infinitely beneath it, is sometimes, even at this late day, mistaken for it. It is the sense of conformity, or non-conformity, to a foreign and powerful Will. A dog abstains from that which he is forbidden to do; or having broken over, has a fear, perhaps also a certain shame: but all this without any moral feeling. He knows what is *forbidden*, and what is *commanded*, or *permitted*; but not what is *right* or *wrong*. The Moral Sentiment differs by a whole heaven from mere deference and subjection to a foreign Will. It is itself Will. There is love in it, and the freedom and gladness of power. It is begotten in the soul, at once a part and a fruit of its strength; is not somewhat laid upon it. It is indeed from God; and yet also is native to the soul, evolved from the nature, of man. It is not submission, but energy. It is active, not passive. It is the rhythm of the universe felt with joy in the soul. It is the chant of Eternal Law, heard, not without, but within; *made*, not without, but within. Made within; and yet it is that one same Voice which sings in every *awakened* spirit the universe through.

Such is Conscience,—the knowledge of Right, the sentiment of Duty,—“joy of the whole world” well named. Not over-fertile of words, it says only in grand simplicity of speech, I OUGHT. But what echoes, what responses does the word awaken! The morning stars sing together and the sons of God shout for joy, when first it is heard. For this is true sphere-music; it is, as I said, the chant of Eternal Law: “*I ought*” strikes a string which vibrates through all firmaments and in every star; and whose music makes accord with the key-note of the universe.—And thus have we marked another step in Spiritual Religion.

3. A third step is taken when man begins to discern the

sacred nature and infinite value of Truth. "Truth, which only doth judge itself," says Bacon, "teacheth that the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making, or wooing of it; the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it; is the sovereign good of human nature." From that degraded sacrificial power-worship it were no small advance to bow down with the Eastern worshippers, adoring the sun: of which even a dying Mirabeau could say, as its early splendor broke over him, "If that be not God, it is his first cousin." And from this, upward to the worship of that other sun, not seen with the eyes of sense; to glad rejoicing in that sweeter light which God "breatheth and inspireth into the face of his chosen:" who can measure this advance?

You will distinguish between the worship of Truth and simple Veracity. The latter is a very valuable quality; but we may be scrupulous about *telling* the truth, yet to the divinity, Truth, pay no homage. Veracity consists in the conformity of expression to knowledge. It is often found where the intellect is held in Egyptian bondage—made a very Helot, a galley-slave; to which in its straitened and limping servitude, free Belief is impossible. And where free inquiry, free belief, are not, intellectual sincerity cannot be. And where intellectual sincerity is not, there is no worship of Truth. To tell the (relative) truth, and to reverence Truth Absolute, are widely, widely different things. Not to lie, is simply to be free from one base and dastardly vice; but a great controlling reverence for Truth stamps one as already among the spiritually Best, the foremost of his kind.

My own observation persuades me that this religion is even now rare, too rare, among men. Indeed one might know this from the wretched ethics of intellect which are now prevalent. According to these notions, which are inculcated in theological seminaries and preached from pul-

pits, Belief is a mere calf, to be offered up as a sacrifice in purchase of future happiness. It is made a mere creature of the will, a puppet, a cat's-paw. These worse than puerile notions show that the religion of intellect, the worship of Truth, is wanting. But other notions than these have prevailed in the Church. In this respect it has wofully degenerated. Jeremy Taylor lived two hundred years ago, and held in his time a rather conservative position; but he says that a good man is no heretic, (much less an infidel,) let him believe what he will.* The "Areopagitica" of Milton is the noblest plea for truth, and for freedom, and progress in Belief that was ever made,—so far as I know. It is starred all over with sentences that, once seen and appreciated, shine on in your memory and do not grow dim.

Certain it is that without this religion all settles into creaming and mantling stagnancy. Truth is the food of the soul; and we live by new harvests. "Beauty is disgraced, love is unlovely, when truth, the half part of heaven, is denied." "Truth," says Milton,—and this is one of the starry sentences,—"Truth is compared in sculpture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition." "Behold," said the adoring Psalmist, "thou desirest truth in the heart: so teach me wisdom in my inmost soul." These utterances are noble and healthy, and express a religion which no man can possess, or rather be possessed by, in over-measure. But there is time only for statement, not for expatiation. Let me then make this emphatic: A sense of the INFINITE sacredness of Truth, *and consequently of the infinite sanctions that attend upon all loving and earnest inquiry*, constitutes one grand element in Spiritual Religion. On the other hand, it follows inevitably that precisely so far as indolence, inertia, acquiescing "timidity" prevail in one,

* Lib. of Proph., Sec. ii., cap.

choke in him the longing and prevent the quest for truth, to such extent he is, in one great respect, an INFIDEL. Show me a man who, by the infinite longings, and undying resolution of his heart, says with Sartor, "Truth! Truth! though it slay me!" and I will show you one who, no matter what he believes, neither is, nor can be, any more infidel than the sun is black, or than Jesus was a felon because crucified between two thieves. Show me, again, a man who holds propositions in themselves correct, yet holds them without worship, without religious love of truth; holds them through "physical inertness," or "motives of secular interest;" through fear, and indifference to all but his own *comfort*; because they are orthodox, and therefore presumably *safe*; and I will not only say with Milton that he is "a heretic in the truth," but do affirm that this man is the true Infidel, having never known, never approached the baptism of Belief.

4. It is another step in the advance of Spiritual Religion when the worth and significance of Love come to be understood and *felt*. Then it is seen that Love is Primal — behind it we cannot go; that this is the "Dove which brooded over the abyss and made it pregnant;" that these skies and stars, this green earth with all its forms of beauty and life, and we ourselves with whatsoever we justly think, and hope, and feel, — are all the offspring and manifestations of Love. Then, "God is Love," murmurs some rapt St. John. Then an Augustine, at the end of ten years of thirsting search after God, — God as a spirit, not as a localized person, or diffused substance, — found Him under the three forms of Love, Truth, Eternity. "O Truth who art Eternity! and Love who art Truth! and Eternity who art Love!" he cries as the beams of a new inspiration stream into his soul, "Thou art my God!" Also Swedenborg, Fichte and others have found that Love and Life are one and the same; that so much Love as there is, so much Life. But above all, a

certain Prayer, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," has opened a vista through which thousands have looked with eyes joyfully streaming, and beheld the awful beauty of that great Mystery of Love, on whose vast bosom the universe floats, and whose waters are the boundless sources of life and blessedness to every receptive soul. And whenever we not only hear of Love with the hearing of the ear, but with our eyes see it, then a new bud has burst, the richest blossom has opened, in the spirit of man.

5. Justice, Truth, and Love we worship as Divine; as the powers and qualities through which God, as spirit, is revealed to our spirit. These qualities are not abstractions, but Living Forces—an inseparable Trinity. We do not say that these are *based upon* Power, because Love is Power, and Truth, issuing from Love *has* Power; and Justice is Truth executed.

Meanwhile we have arrived by degrees at a far deeper and more divine conception of man. Not to us, as to the authors of that venerable tradition, is the blood of man his subtlest principle, his soul; nor are those nervous fluids, those fine effluences of the brain, which are so much more ethereal than blood. We come to know of man as a spirit; to see more in him than the body, and more in the body than itself. Perceiving also that spirit is imperishable, and taking counsel of the unappeasable longings of his soul, man asserts his own immortality; and thus overarches his being with destinies how great! Then too it is seen that this spirit is not a mere indestructible, indefinite *something*; but is the Man in man, is the one sole HUMAN creation. This, with all the sympathies, instincts, impulses, powers, thereto belonging, is not so much the soul *of* man, as it is Man, a Soul. For beside this there is no Man at all.

But it is seen that the Man in man, the Soul, often lies dormant, or awakes only in its inferior instincts and facul-

ties; and occasionally after a long dormancy suddenly rises majestically and assumes sway; as during the recent warm days, we have seen burst by millions the buds that had been long waiting, and the grass, before so sluggish, leap green from the soil. Thus there could hardly fail to rise under some form of statement, a doctrine of the Second or Spiritual Birth,—Regeneration, as it is called. Once that we had known of the Human Spirit as a real and positive entity, having powers, laws, qualities; once that we had seen the body flourishing, the brute appetites strong, the brute intelligence active, while this lay dormant; there could not fail to arise this doctrine of a second Birth; and accordingly Jesus reproaches Nicodemus for his ignorance of it. It will also be perceived by a careful reader of the New Testament, that this is not a second birth *of the Spirit* (more properly a metamorphosis), as our Calvinists make it; but *another* birth *added to* the physical one.

The awakened soul issues in Character; which is the result and the manifestation to others of its activities. This is the form, and bloom, and fragrance of the opened rose. It is the music which the spirit makes, heard sometimes across oceans, yea, and round the world.

It is seen also that the sum of all duties for man (and all duties are privileges) is *Fidelity to his own Spiritual Constitution*, to his own Soul; the sum of all sins is infidelity to this, yea, and the sum of all Infidelities is the same. The last wickedness was held to be the selling of your Soul to the Devil; which, what was it but *utter* infidelity to one's Spiritual Nature? The laws and demands of this Soul have an *infinite* sacredness and authority for us; because in being faithful to them we are faithful to God. For in these laws and demands God meets us. His revelations are birth-acts in the soul, by which new activities bring us the knowledge of new truths. In the Soul, in the aspirations, instincts, and laws of our Spiritual Constitution, we meet God, and unite with Him. The

Divine Impulses and Primal Energies of the universe pass, not as alien, but as homogeneous into the soul of man. Through our Spiritual Nature we discern and stand upon the Eternal adamant, the foundation of all things. The thirst of our soul can be slaked only with the Waters of Life; we must drink (or perish) at the Fountain of Being and of Thought. Here we reach the doctrine of Influx, the inflowing of God. But who has asked himself why, when this Divine Spirit enters, He is felt within as a perfectly homogeneous, not a foreign Nature; confessedly by no effort of consciousness to be separated from the intuitions of our own reason and the impulses of our own heart? There is a great light, but it is the same in kind with that by which we always walk. There is a great light, but it is still the light of Thought. And though the illumination, with what of inspired enthusiasm it may bring, carries us far out of our circumscribed personality, out of the region of selfish interests and cravings, it only more immerses and imbathes us *in* our Spiritual Nature. For there, as I said, we meet God; and when the brawling of personal appetites and selfish hungers has ceased; when the will, baptized in Belief, consents to the everlasting laws of the Spirit, and there is a great bright calm within, as of serene oceans flooded and radiant with light; then, amid the sweet hush, there comes a voice, like the voice of Eternal Silence, "*Thou hast made all thine mine, and, lo, all mine is thine!*" And then rises over the horizon of the soul, bringing within blessed and everlasting morn, that truth, in whose beams it has been the life-long, and shall be the eternity-long, delight of every saint to bathe—the Soul's sonship, heirship to the Infinite God. His voice to it is, "All mine is thine."

O Man, stationed and disciplined in Time, but still child and heir of Eternity, forget not thine inheritance; be true, be true, and once again, *be true to thine own Soul!* Learn to revere thy spiritual possibilities; learn to live in

hope of realizing these ; learn with what Being thine own is homogeneous ; and all sordidness, all cowardice and mean despair will flee away. Who could be the slave of opinion, of vanity, of fear, having once known himself as the Child of God ?

Man commonly learns to reverence his own possibilities, mainly by the grand realizations he sees them to have obtained in others. It is at the call of a brother's voice from above that we begin to ascend. Nothing affects men so profoundly as great Character. They may mock at it afar off, but once within the range of its attractions, all the depths of their souls are stirred. As Character is the grand miracle, surpassing all others, so its attractions work miraculously, with a course not to be traced, and a power neither to be calculated nor defied. And there was One, from whom this power went forth as a singular and unexampled force in humanity, kindling from heart to heart till it spread over a continent ; then leapt an ocean and spread again. One, the sacred beauty of whose spirit awoke in other souls strange thrills of reverence, till the stiffened and long-silent chords, swept by the hand of a divine passion, shook and vibrated with true spirit music ; and bowing themselves down, men cried in tones all trembling with love and awe, "Lo, it is He—it is the Lord !" Highest and lowliest, greatest and meekest of all, he not only "bore witness to the truth," but lived it, *was* it ; by that splendor of character was most truly "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He had little beside character and wisdom to make him remembered and cared for. Born in an obscure, far-off province ; leading an obscure, outcast life ; at last perishing obscurely amid the frenzy, and fury, and deafening, dusty tumult of a Jewish mob,—He must be forgotten ! Or rather say He was already forgotten ; for who knew of him ? But no ;

"One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost ;"

that sweet light would not, could not be quenched; through all obscurations it struggled out; and now one third of the globe is (nominally) Christian. If you say, as you justly may, that they are hardly more than nominally so; yet that mere profession, the fact that Respectability requires it — what a homage is that rendered to character! Think of it: a man is not acceptable in society now unless he is a nominal Christian; and in a church full of respectability-worship and broadcloth-morality, a symbol of crime and sin and ignominy — the Roman gallows — is cherished as the symbol of its most sacred hopes, and its richest honors. I often meditate upon this, and think what Character can do. There is nothing that, being suffused with its effluence, will not be adopted into the reverence of mankind. Alas, that its attractions work so slowly, and lose so much of their success in obtaining it!

Such is an essay toward a brief statement of Spiritual Religion — what it is. These suggestions represent (approximately) the spirit and aim of our enterprise. We are *not* sacrificialists; we *are* believers in the grand Possibilities, Destinies, Duties of the Human Soul. We believe in Mercy, in Right and Duty, in Truth, in Love, in Character. We believe in the human affections as intimations of primary truths, and worthy of trust; in Conscience and Reason as the receptacles and storehouses of God's inspirations; in Jesus as divinely exemplifying the power of Character, and made by his mighty attractions in very deed a Redeemer and Saviour to many; in God as the paternal, all-creating, all-embracing Love, whose ways are truth, and all his thoughts eternal, infinitely above us, yet homogeneous with our Spiritual Nature, — Source and Home and everlasting Content of the Soul.

Let it be added in the briefest terms, that it is with us a cherished "article of faith" that we are, in all our relations and capacities, to act from our highest Belief. While so

many are fired with the thought of national destiny, our hearts burn within us while we remember the destiny of Man. And we hope, not with languor or despondency, that better Beliefs will prevail, not in the Church alone, but also in the State ; that by brave and holy fidelity to truth, by wise, noble religious action, the black superstitions, the base scepticisms, the barbarous tyrannies and slaveries of the time shall cease, and emancipated Man walk forth, inwardly and outwardly FREE.

It is with such beliefs, such hopes and aims that we have united ourselves here into a band of worshippers. How long our organization will last I do not pretend to foretell. It is a sweet imagination that it may outlive our frosts, survive all shocks, keep warm by inward life-heat through all the sad winter of transition to better beliefs, and at that future time when summer shall come again in our moral world, when the soul of man in this New England shall again put forth leaf and blossom, and the birds of God sit in the branches thereof and sing, then stand firm and strong ; stand like an old oak, that having welcomed the robins of a hundred springs to the shelter of his branches, still, stout, and sound of heart, holds up his far-spread garniture of green to the summer sky, and rustles his clinging brown leaves defiantly to the winter wind. But we cannot tell, and do not care to guess. We only know that here was given us an opportunity for high fidelity to truth, which we have sought to improve. To-day we feel that we can do the same to-morrow, and we go forward to meet the future with hope and not with fear. But even though our organization perish, yet *principle* is imperishable. Yonder sun, now "sloping toward heaven's descent his westerling wheel," will soon dip beneath the horizon ; his light will vanish out of the west, and the great Night will come and gather us in its arms and hide us in its void bosom. But not one particle of

light is abolished; and Day *is*, though Night be here. Thus our organization may dissolve, melting into thinnest air; but no dissolution will come to the principles on which, to some extent, I *know* that we have acted. And any outward defeat, which can come, at the worst, could never deprive us of that victory. Let, then, the year stoop forward on his path, and run his circling course. We accept the days that he casts to us from his bosom, each as a golden gift,—a space to be filled with nobleness and holiness, with truth, with love and duty. And joyfully as the year, we go forward upon our path, knowing in Whose arms we are enfolded, and sure that sooner will the sweet skies break up their azure immortal arch, and lapse, withered, to the horizon, than will God desert us, if we desert not ourselves and Him.

